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Kalus Fiedler. *Fake Healing Claims for HIV and AIDS in Malawi.* Luwinga, Mzusu: Mzuni Press. December 2016. 47 pp. ISBN 978-99960-45-26-4. Soft Cover Price: \$19.00.

Reviewed by Charles Muiruri, Duke University, charles.muiruri@duke.edu

I must declare that I am not an expert in the fake healer's topic and therefore I relied on my HIV/AIDS professional experience on this review. As researchers work towards the HIV cure, this issue of fake healers is very important since it affects prevention, control, and treatment of HIV. In this text, the author tries to illuminate the negative consequences of this phenomenon using an approach that I am not familiar with. I am, however, more familiar with other methodologies such as qualitative methods that allows the participants of scholarly work to have a voice. Nonetheless, I thought the author had very good examples of fake healers and healings and he explored traditional (separated herbal from other traditional healing), religious (faith healing), and then dedicated the last part of the text to explore his perceptions on Voluntary Male Medical Circumcision Campaign (VMMCC). In the need for a cure, the author observes and provides instances where patients are lured into trying the fake healers. I was not able to make any comparisons of the author's work to other scholarly works because I am more familiar with scientific writing and presentations that are based on evidence. Since I am not an expert in this kind of work, I was only limited to analyzing the content of the text.

From a technical writing point of view, the text had several shortcomings. Though the author adopted a thematic approach throughout the text, I was struck by his lack of evidence on some of the claims made. The author failed to present evidence based arguments in some of the critical aspects of his thesis. I understand that he is not an HIV expert but a little research and also careful editing would have made his work more appealing. An example of the claims that were not supported included the following: on page 17, the footnote "*Here I base most of what I write on my memory and observation. I have not found any scholarly study of the phenomenon yet. So the main source is the newspapers, which unfortunately I did not keep.*" Clearly, in any peer-reviewed work this would not be acceptable. The author would have been asked to either drop the claims or to do more research on the topic. And on top of that he cited Wikipedia that is not all advisable. In some instances, there have been some scholarly works done on HIV and the "fake healers;" for example, Thieleman et al (2014) have published works describing the effect of the healers on HIV/AIDS.

The author also cited his students' works without acknowledging them; in my view this amounts to plagiarism. I also found several instances where he was unclear and confusing to the reader; he, for example, informed the reader that he had taken the "Roman Catholic position that healing must be proven, not just claimed or pronounced" (8), and he seemed to have changed his

mind stating that “I do not think that always scientific or laboratory proof is required, (and that) observed healing may well be sufficient” (9). From these quotes, I found it very hard to follow as he did not seem to take a clear stand.

From the title, one is led to believe that the author would tackle fake healing, however, he introduces the issue of VMMCC at the end of the text. VMMCC, which is a preventive strategy and not one that promises healing, did not seem to fit with the overall theme of the text. In the introductory chapter, the author had healing and prevention in the description of VMMCC’s role. It would have been very helpful to discuss those two aspects separately. Prevention assumes that one has not acquired the disease, and one, therefore, does not require healing. The author’s argument about VMMCC was not clear. Was it that VMMCC was not effective in preventing HIV or was it that more work would need to be done in the dissemination of VMMCC’s benefits? The author’s views changed a few times, and there wasn’t a clear connection between healing and VMMCC.

Even after declaring that he was not a medical researcher, the author proceeded to provide his own analytical basis to calculate the risk reduction of VMMCC. He then compared condom use and VMMCC (39). The author should have done more research on VMMCC’s recommendations as it does not substitute the use of condoms, and more importantly personal observations are really not substantiated here! In the text, there were also several grammatical errors as well as a lack of consistency in the use of terms such as HIV/AIDS; he, for instance, referred to it as *HIV and AIDS*, then as *HIV/Aids* and on other occasions as *HIV and Aids*. Apart from having mixed up the fonts, he was also inconsistent in his use of the sizes and this was indeed very distracting.

My overall impression was that the text’s description felt like an opinion piece. In my view, this text does not provide any break through findings or break new grounds as regards research. There is a body of knowledge that are methodologically sound that have explored these topics; and these may be viewed on the National Centre for Biotechnology Information- US National Library of Medicine (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) or other academic search engines. The author’s inclusion of a discussion of VMMCC did not link well with the topic of fake healers and this was an issue that was not thoroughly investigated; in fact, the author left a lot of loose ends for the reader to reach his/her conclusion and this therefore does not help to solidify his case. Furthermore, if the author had visited the NCBI site he would have come across a body of knowledge that concentrated on VMMCC and that could have assisted in validating his claims.

In summary, I found this work to be incomplete in several areas. First, the approach taken by the author in developing his argument was not well informed. Secondly, some citations from sites such as Wikipedia were questionable, and other citations that he referred to could not be backed up from available sources. Thirdly, the layout of this work was riddled with grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, and stylistic slips. Fourthly, the discussion on VMMCC did not fit within the text’s overall theme. And fifthly, since the author’s stand regarding certain issues were unclear, he somewhat misled the reader and in addition to that some of his thoughts were presented with no accompanying verifiable references. Apart from my critical evaluation of this text, may I suggest that it would be a useful text for instructors, who teach technical writing skills, to evaluate, and it would be a good example of a text that needs to go through a peer review process.

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